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ABSTRACT

Due to the implementation of new standards for academic progress in Fall 1978 and the resultant suspension of or imposition of credit limitations upon students not meeting these standards, Miami-Dade Community College developed and tested an academic alert program in which computer-generated letters were sent to students at mid-term to provide an assessment of their academic progress and to refer them to appropriate counseling services. A project committee, with representatives from each of the college's four campuses, composed messages for each of 14 unique student groups. These messages were based upon progress reports from faculty and predetermined criteria, including course load, reading level, native language, physical limitations, math scores, and age. Computer programs, incorporated in the college's Response System with Variable Prescription data processing system, were used to place students in appropriate categories and to generate the letters. The warning system, when used with first-time students in mid-Fall 1978, revealed that 43% needed to improve in at least one course and that there was a close correlation between attendance and performance. The study report provides a literature review, academic alert and advisement statistics, a proposal for program evaluation, and a discussion of the participatory governance system used in developing the alert and advisement system. (JP)

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DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACADEMIC ALERT AND ADVISEMENT SYSTEM USING A PARTICIPATIONAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

by

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Miami-Dade Community College

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Miami-Dade Community College implemented new standards of academic progress 1978 fall term. This prompted the limitation of numbers of credits allowed for a large segment of its student population. Because enrollments had stabilized, and a substantial number of students needed to improve their academic performance to avoid suspension or credit limitations, it was of utmost importance that an alert and advisement system designed to help students earn satisfactory grades and obtain assistance with course selection be developed and implemented during fall term.

Procedures followed to complete this project were both evaluative and developmental. Academic support and advisement needs at the college were reviewed along with current literature pertaining to advisement, governance, and computer systems. Then a college-wide committee was convened to develop the alert system messages. Implementation of the system was planned for all first-time-in-college students fall term. The final steps were to suggest refinements, revisions or additions to the system, to have committee members evaluate the governance structure and products developed, and to propose an evaluation plan which solicited assessment of the system from faculty and students.

Academic alert and advisement letters were sent to nearly 10,000 first-time-in-college Miami-Dade students in October 1978. The RSVP computer system generated statistics for each message contained in the letters and this information was made available to each of Miami-Dade's campuses and to district personnel. The committee members responded very positively to both the governance structure and alert system. A proposal to have students and faculty evaluate the system soon after its implementation was developed and presented to the college's executive committee. The recommendations that resulted from this project were: (1) that the system be continued and expanded to include continuing and transfer students; (2) that the system add information about students' cumulative records; (3) that the proposed evaluation plan be implemented fully; (4) that refinements to the system be made after review of student and faculty evaluations; (5) that a participational governance structure be adopted for other college committees; (6) that further use of the RSVP system be investigated; (7) that this project be utilized as a model for the development of additional student services.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Standards of academic progress were adopted at Miami-Dade Community College 1978 fall term. Categories of academic warning, academic probation, and academic suspension resulted for students affected by the standards (see Appendix A). At the beginning of fall term (78-1), 4,011 students college-wide were placed in one of the standards categories. These students were limited in the number of credits they could register for and they had specific courses required or the recommendation of other interventions.

For the first time in its history, the college was limiting the number of credits allowed for a large segment of its student population and even providing for suspension of students if their academic records did not improve. Because enrollments had stabilized and a substantial number of students needed to improve their academic performance to avoid suspension or credit limitations, it was of utmost importance that an alert and advisement system designed to help students earn satisfactory grades and obtain assistance with course selection be developed and implemented at once.

Miami-Dade Community College has been in operation for 18 years and has grown from a single campus with less than 2,000 students to a multi-campus college having nearly 60,000 students. Some programs and services at each campus are unique in response to students' and surrounding community needs. Because of the size and structure of the college, and the common concern at all campuses for helping students, a college-wide committee with representatives from each of the four campuses was convened to develop a system which would help students complete their courses satisfactorily and receive improved academic advisement. The primary objectives of the committee were to provide students with information about their current term progress and to direct them to the correct advisement location and other campus resources.

No systematic midterm evaluations of academic progress were provided for students when the standards of academic progress were implemented. In addition, academic advisement for course and program selection was not comprehensive and students were allowed to self-advise. The purpose of this project was to develop a college-wide system which would alert students to their current term progress and provide them with improved advisement support. Consideration was given to establishing a common framework while allowing each campus the flexibility of incorporating its own structure within the program. This system alleviated the problems of limited reports of term progress and less than adequate information about advisement assistance and it contributed

to effective implementation of the standards of academic progress.

The college-wide committee formed to develop this program included representatives from each of Miami-Dade's campuses. A participational governance structure was assumed to allow for inclusion of ideas from each participant on an equal basis and to broaden support of the project throughout the college. Administrative support was received from the executive vice president, vice president for educational services, and all campus vice presidents. They allowed for the provision of personnel, computer, and financial resources early fall term so that the computer-enhanced academic alert and advisement system was in place before students registered for winter term classes.

Procedures followed to complete this project were both evaluative and developmental. First, academic support and advisement needs at Miami-Dade Community College were reviewed along with current literature pertaining to academic advisement, governance, and computer services. Then a college-wide committee was established to develop the academic alert and advisement system. The first tasks completed by the committee established a participational form of governance and assessed college resources available to assist in the completion of the project.

As a result of the committee's efforts, a computer-enhanced academic alert and advisement system was developed and implemented fall term 1978. This system produced a

personalized letter for every new student registered for credit courses at any of Miami-Dade's campuses. The letter provided specific information about current term academic progress and advisement information for winter term registration. The final phase of the project suggested refinements and additions for the system, as well as an evaluation plan, and made recommendations regarding the effectiveness of the governance structure employed.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Implementation of new academic standards at Miami-Dade Community College provided a significant challenge to administrators, faculty, and staff. Difficulty with the establishment of new standards of academic progress while maintaining an "open door policy" for admission to the college was readily apparent. Concerted effort had to be directed toward helping students maintain satisfactory academic standing and providing them with assistance needed to overcome any diagnosed deficiencies. One preventive measure undertaken by Miami-Dade was the academic alert and advisement system described herein.

The College Committee on Academic Affairs (CCAA) includes representatives from every academic, student services, and support division at each of Miami-Dade's four major campuses. At the June 1978 CCAA meeting, a faculty representative suggested that communication with students concerning their current term academic progress part way through the semester would allow students increased opportunity for rectifying deficiencies noted by their instructors before assignment of end of term grades. This suggestion was incorporated in the academic alert and

advisement system developed during July and August 1978.

The committee convened to develop the computer-enhanced academic alert and advisement system included representatives from each of the major campuses and district consultants (see Appendix B). Administrators, teaching faculty, student services personnel, testing and research staff, a systems analyst, and a consultant for the response system with variable prescriptions made up the membership of the committee. The academic rank of the participants varied from paraprofessionals to full professors.

The selection of a participational governance structure facilitated the inclusion of all members' ideas in the final product. Besides unanimous support for providing students with information about their academic progress, all representatives agreed that specific information about academic advisement for the next term should be the other major component of the project. College resources available to assist in meeting these two goals included an existing system of computer programs called the Response System with Variable Prescriptions (RSVP), assistance of programmers, analysts, and a computer systems consultant, monetary supplements for all committee members, computer time for printing letters to students and progress rolls, and budget for purchase of software and mailing expenses.

Review of the Literature

The committee's adherence to a participational governance structure allowed for the accomplishment of the task of developing an academic alert and advisement system in the most efficient and effective manner. Although the literature review did not reveal a theoretical pattern of governance appropriate for all educational institutions or all tasks, there were many positive references to shared authority and a participational structure. The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education suggested that governance methods should be related to the functions being performed and that central coordination was necessary (1973, 14). They state (1973, 79):

> The basic test of governance is whether the decisions actually made do or do not enhance the long-run welfare of higher education and of society, and the quality of the individual campus, and whether the solutions are appropriate to and commensurate with the problems. A second test is whether the processes followed gain respect and a sense of legitimacy and trust.

This practicum included an evaluation of the participational governance method followed to complete the project and recommendations for evaluation of the product developed. Both components were supported in the Carnegie Commission recommendations when they suggested that both products and processes of decision making be evaluated.

Acceptance of the concept of shared authority was strengthened by statements made by the American Association for Higher Education and the American Association of University Professors. In their desire for mutual understanding

of the government of colleges and universities, they stressed the interdependence of several parties, administrators, faculty, students, boards of trustees, and others. The two general conclusions reached were (Mortimer, 1978, 5) that important issues should involve initiating capacity and decision making participation of all institutional components and differences in weight of each voice should be determined by responsibility of each segment for task at hand. Both groups strongly recommended that (Mortimer, 1978, 9) "involvement in the decision making process must occur early enough that alternatives can be considered--well in advance of the point at which a decision is to be made." This timing consideration was adhered to in the completion of this project. It resulted in a unified product which incorporated unique features for each campus. In addition, satisfaction with opportunities to influence decisions made was expressed by all committee members.

Individuals at all levels must be permitted, rather, encouraged to participate more meaningfully in decision making. Dressel (1972, 134) points out that internal campus governance has been gaining in acceptance and that policy controls are essential for efficient and effective operation. His thoughts offer support for Chickering's recommendation for effective governance (1975, 342), "Reason, evidence, and objective analysis supplemented by intuition and personal experience, will create conditions to serve individual learning and development and to serve fuller

realization of human potentials for good." His statement is certainly a challenge for all members of the college community, particularly those who participate in any aspect of decision making.

Various governance propositions were considered in the functioning and development of the committee which devised the alert and advisement system. Questions regarding the distribution of responsibilities among participants and the organizational structure of the committee were addressed as suggested by Corson (1960, 183). Consideration was given to allowing policy to be formulated by the group, to placing responsibility for campus decisions on the campus representatives, and to indicating the limits of campus autonomy as proposed by Richardson in Governance for the Two Year College.

Concerns have been expressed at all levels of education about the inadequacies of academic advisement. Miami-Dade felt a strong need to improve this service for its students, particularly in light of the implementation of new standards of academic progress. One advisement program reported successful by Grites (1977) was called the four-by-four model of student development. The system centered on the institutional structure and used a variety of resources through an integrated approach. The advisement segment of this project, although not modeled after the four-by-four plan, also used many college resources and allowed each campus to include elements according to its own structure.

A unique feature of this project was the emphasis placed on computer support for both development and implementation of the academic alert and advisement system. Upon reviewing the literature it became obvious that use of the computer in providing student services was not new. It had been used in the job placement system at Joliet Junior College with success (Mihelich, 1977, 14). Another example of its use with community college students was in career development activities (Pyle, 1976). McKinley (1975) reported increased knowledge about first-choice occupation and more careful thought about vocational and educational plans for users of the Computerized Information System. Evaluation of the System for Interactive Guidance (SIGI) at Illinois State University was also positive, with students indicating its helpfulness in enhancing the decision making process for selecting a major or program of study (Cochran, 1976).

Incorporating the use of both computerization and student data systems has received favorable recommendations by users. Jepsen (1972) saw positive results with this combination in the provision of financial aid services. Cross reports on the Teaching Information Processing System (TIPS) and the Response System with Variable Prescriptions (RSVP) in Accent on Learning. Both are computer-managed instruction systems which have enjoyed considerable success.

The RSVP system was selected as the computer delivery system for this project in an attempt to gain benefits

of computer assistance in a multi-faceted alert and advisement program. The program provided students with information about current term academic progress and advisement referral. Both the resulting product and the process used for this practicum were important. If the governance structure was effective, then the academic alert and advisement system would yield positive results.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES

Design of the Project

Implementation of new standards of academic progress and a lack of midterm evaluation of students' performance prompted this project. The procedures followed to complete this study were both evaluative and developmental. First a review of academic support and advisement needs at Miami-Dade Community College was conducted. Then current literature pertaining to academic advisement, governance, and computer services was examined. The next step was to establish a college-wide committee to develop the computer-enhanced academic alert and advisement system.

The committee membership included representation from each of Miami-Dade's four campuses, North, South, New World Center, and Medical, with considerable diversity in terms of areas of expertise and academic rank. The group unanimously endorsed a participational governance structure with each member having equal weight in decision making. A lead person from each campus was designated to facilitate communication and a chairman was selected to coordinate the implementation schedule between campuses.

Once the committee for the computer-enhanced academic alert and advisement system was instituted, it identified criteria from the college's student data base, test data, and progress reports from faculty to form unique groups of students who would receive specialized messages. Then the messages were written by each campus subgroup following the agreed-upon college framework for the messages and including unique descriptors for the respective campuses. Miami-Dade's division of computer-based instructional development programmed RSVP and provided the committee with the necessary computer processing for the review of the letters. A schedule of activities was established and adhered to in order to implement the system. On October 12, 1978, letters comprising the academic alert and advisement system were generated and mailed to nearly 10,000 first-time-in-college Miami-Dade students.

The final steps were to suggest refinements, revisions, or additions to the system, to assess the effectiveness of the committee's governance structure, and to propose a method for evaluating the academic alert and advisement system. The executive committee of the college was provided with copies of this project so that they could determine merits of allocating additional resources for evaluation and possible expansion of the system.

Development of the Messages

The academic alert and advisement committee determined two basic objectives to be accomplished: (1) to provide students with information about their academic performance part way through their first semester in college; (2) to refer students to the appropriate location for academic advisement for the next semester. These tasks were carried out using an existing computer system called RSVP.

RSVP is a system of computer programs that accomplishes three main functions. It maintains data-records consisting of student attributes, student performance, and faculty evaluation of student performance for an unlimited number of students. The individualized communication, or letter, to each student is based on information stored in the data-record files. Finally, RSVP provides reports to faculty, advisors, and others on both individual students and groups of students. Miami-Dade has used the RSVP system since 1972 but the development of the academic alert and advisement system was the first effort to use RSVP on a college-wide basis.

The first task of the committee was to determine the attributes to be used in composing the messages to students. All committee members participated in the decision making that led to the final list of 15 attributes. These included distinctions according to course load, reading level, current term academic progress, class attendance, VA or financial aid recipient, program of study, course withdrawal

record, faculty or self-advised for current term, location of courses in schedule, native language, visa status and course load, no show for one or more courses, physical limitations, math score, and age (see Appendix C).

Criteria from the student data base, test data, and progress rolls from faculty were combined to form unique student groups. For the purpose of reporting student progress, the committee conceived 14 unique groups. Twelve additional groups were formed for the purpose of providing advisement information for next term registration. The two grids depicting the factors considered for variable feedback are shown in Appendices D and E. A further requirement was that no communication (RSVP letter) could exceed one page and maximum lengths were established for each section of the RSVP letter (see Appendix F).

Once these parameters were set, the campus representatives wrote the messages for each unique student group identified. All messages from each campus were reviewed and edited by the entire committee and then by respective campus personnel. A sample letter from each of Miami-Dade's four campuses is shown in Appendix G. Letters may have two-page length in appendix but size of computer print and margins available in RSVP system allowed each letter to meet one page requirement.

Population to Receive Letters

The committee deliberated as to who should receive the academic alert and advisement letters fall 1978. New standards of academic progress were instituted beginning fall 1978 for all new Miami-Dade students. Students who had attended Miami-Dade in previous semesters, however, had both fall and winter terms, 1978-79, to improve their academic standing. With this in mind, the committee decided that the initial population to receive the RSVP letters would consist of all first-time-in-college Miami-Dade students who were registered for academic credit courses after the fifth day of classes fall term 1978.

The number of students college-wide who were categorized as first-time-in-college was 10,539. Of this number, 413 were not sent letters because they had dropped all courses before the letters were mailed or the college did not have an adequate mailing address for them. Another 420 students who fit the criteria to be recipients of an alert and advisement letter were excluded from the population at the request of one of the campuses. This was done because these students belonged to a special vocational program and it was thought that the alert letters would not be helpful to them. Therefore, the total number of actual recipients of academic alert and advisement RSVP letters numbered 9,706.

Implementation Schedule

In order to implement the computer-enhanced academic alert and advisement system fall term 1978, it was necessary to establish a schedule of activities to be carried out according to a fixed time table. This time table showing dates when various activities would be completed was established in August 1978 (see Appendix H). The chairman and all committee members worked relentlessly to see that the implementation phase was carried out according to schedule.

Institutional support extended to the project also helped the committee meet established deadlines. The campus vice presidents, registrars, computer programmers, and operations staff helped the project move in the planned direction. Of particular importance to the success of the project was the participation of the faculty in completing and submitting the student progress rolls on schedule. If all steps were implemented according to the time table, students would have the opportunity to receive information about current term academic performance and academic advisement before selecting courses for the next semester.

Assumptions and Expected Results

The development and implementation of the academic alert and advisement system provided Miami-Dade Community College students with a much needed service. The project also allowed for the evaluation of the participational governance structure employed by the committee. It was

assumed that by asking faculty to evaluate students' progress after the first six weeks of the fall term, it was possible to give positive reinforcement to those who were performing satisfactorily, and also to point out ways to remediate academic difficulties for students who had deficiencies reported.

In that Miami-Dade is a large, multi-campus college, it was necessary to allow for as much campus autonomy as possible. It was hypothesized that the use of the RSVP computer system in this project, along with a participational governance structure, would contribute significantly to the personalization of the system and to the campus representatives' satisfaction with the final products.

It was further anticipated that the teaching faculty would submit student progress rolls in large numbers. Their involvement was deemed necessary if the alert system was to be successful. In addition, it was hoped that this project would engender increased willingness on the part of the teaching faculty to work in concert with student services personnel.

Recommendations offered regarding the academic alert and advisement system, its evaluation, and the committee structure provided information needed to make decisions about further development of the program. It was expected that the governance structure of the committee that developed the system would be evaluated positively and that

the academic alert and advisement system would be well-received by students, faculty, and administrators.

Limitations of the Project

Limitations of this project included the following items.

1. Only first-time-in-college Miami-Dade students were included in the population, less than 20 percent of the total student population.

2. Time limitations did not allow for an evaluation of the system as part of this project.

3. It was not possible to incorporate all student attributes in the RSVP letters.

4. Throughout the project, it was necessary to adhere to a fixed and limited time schedule.

Definition of Terms

A glossary of specialized terms used in this project follows.

Academic alert and advisement system - computer-enhanced program which uses selected student attributes to develop a unique letter for each student indicating current term academic performance and advisement referral for next term registration.

Fall term 1978 - sixteen-week semester beginning in August and ending in December 1978.

First-time-in-college students - all students who registered for academic credit at Miami-Dade fall term 1978 and who had completed no previous college work.

Response system with variable prescriptions (RSVP) - computer-based instructional management program which produces responses in the form of a highly personal letter to each student included in the system.

Standards of academic progress - set of guidelines at Miami-Dade which establish unsatisfactory levels for grade point averages and ratios of credits registered for to credits earned.

Student progress roll - form for each course sequence listing names of students included in the academic alert and advisement system and providing space for faculty to indicate current term academic performance and attendance.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

On 12 October 1978 academic alert and advisement letters were generated for 9,706 Miami-Dade Community College students. The implementation schedule developed was followed completely and students received their alert letters by 16 October. The RSVP computer system generated statistics regarding the distribution of students for each message and this information was made available to each campus and to district personnel. After reviewing these statistics, refinements and additions were suggested. A further assessment asked committee members to evaluate the committee's governance structure. A final result was the development of an evaluation plan which asked recipients of alert letters and faculty to assess the academic alert and advisement system.

Academic Alert and Advisement Statistics

College wide, 90 percent of the progress rolls indicating students' academic performance and attendance were completed and returned. This faculty support for the academic alert and advisement system allowed for the letters sent to students to contain information considered vital to

the success of the program. Table 1 depicts faculty evaluation of student performance: college-wide 23 percent of students were assessed as performing satisfactorily in all courses; 17 percent showed satisfactory performance in some courses but no information reported in others; performance needed improvement in one or more courses indicated for 43 percent of the students; no information received concerning performance for 17 percent of the students. Attendance reports indicated 21 percent of the students needed improvement and 11 percent were told they had courses listed on class schedule but had not attended any classes. These data are reflected in Table 2.

A crosstabulation of academic performance and attendance was conducted. The results are shown in Table 3 and they depict a correlation between poor attendance and improvement needed in performance. Fifty-five percent of students marked for poor attendance were also evaluated as needing improvement in academic performance whereas only eight percent of students whose attendance needed improvement were doing satisfactory work in all courses.

Statistics concerning program of study and method of advisement fall term were completed for all students who received an academic alert and advisement letter. Throughout the college, 72 percent of the students had selected a program of study, while 13 percent stated they were undecided and 15 percent indicated non-degree status.

TABLE 1

FACULTY EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

FACULTY EVALUATION	CAMPUS								TOTAL COLLEGE	
	North		South		New World Center		Medical Center			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Satisfactory performance in all courses enrolled	780	21%	1,243	32%	187	10%	62	37%	2,272	23%
Satisfactory performance in courses reported but no information in other(s)	770	20%	505	13%	303	16%	39	23%	1,617	17%
Improvement needed in performance in one or more courses	1,629	43%	1,944	51%	544	28%	50	29%	4,167	43%
No information about performance in any course	613	16%	146	4%	873	46%	18	11%	1,650	17%

TABLE 2

FACULTY REPORT ON STUDENT ATTENDANCE

FACULTY EVALUATION	CAMPUS								TOTAL COLLEGE	
	North		South		New World Center		Medical Center			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of students marked for poor attendance	800	21%	940	24%	243	13%	17	10%	2,000	21%
Number of students marked for "no shows"	577	15%	253	7%	190	10%	14	8%	1,034	11%
Number of students marked for poor attendance or "no shows"	1,377	36%	1,193	31%	433	23%	31	18%	3,034	31%

TABLE 3

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CROSSTABULATED
WITH STUDENT ATTENDANCE

ATTENDANCE/PERFORMANCE	CAMPUS								TOTAL COLLEGE	
	North		South		New World Center		Medical Center			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of students marked for poor attendance or "no shows" in the satisfactory performance in all courses category	76	10%	93	7%	10	5%	1	2%	180	8%
Number of students marked for poor attendance or "no show" in the satisfactory performance in courses reported category	200	26%	103	20%	63	21%	3	8%	369	23%
Number of students marked for poor attendance or "no shows" in the improvement needed in performance in one or more courses category	1,026	63%	946	49%	296	54%	23	46%	2,291	55%
Number of students marked for poor attendance or "no shows" in the no information about performance in any course category	75	12%	51	34%	64	7%	4	22%	194	12%

In terms of academic advisement, faculty advised 88 percent of the students and 12 percent were self-advised.

Students who had withdrawn from one or more courses but were still registered for at least one course when the alert letters were printed numbered 803 and represented eight percent of the population receiving RSVP letters. It should be noted, however, that for this study the total population of 9,706 did not include 223 students who had withdrawn from all courses. Although these students were excluded from this project's population, they do influence withdrawal figures for the college.

Special messages were developed for several unique groups of students. Numbers of students receiving these messages are shown in Table 4. Of students receiving veterans' benefits, 48 percent were alerted to improve academic performance in at least one course. Only seven percent of international students showed a credit enrollment below requirement. Students told to obtain assistance with math numbered 1,648 which represented over half of students who had math scores available. All students who indicated physical limitation on application to the college were given a message about where to obtain special services. The last special message described activities for students 26 years of age or older and all students in the subgroup received this information.

TABLE 4

STUDENTS RECEIVING SPECIAL MESSAGES

STUDENT CATEGORY	North		South		New World Center		Medical Center		TOTAL COLLEGE	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Students receiving Veterans' Benefits alerted to improve performance	53	51%	45	55%	13	29%	-	-	111	48%
International students alerted to minimum required credit enrollment	5	4%	12	8%	7	8%	1	20%	25	7%
Students alerted to receive help in math (if a math score available)	1,313	51%	297	64%	16	17%	22	88%	1,648	52%
Physically limited given message about available services	35	100%	20	100%	1	100%	-	-	56	100%
Students 26 years or older given message about programs and services	563	100%	404	100%	671	100%	65	100%	1,703	100%

Note: Percentages computed for number of students in category.

Evaluation of Governance Structure

All committee members were asked to complete an evaluation of the academic alert and advisement committee's governance structure. To increase likelihood of honest responses, no names were placed on assessment instruments. This informal evaluation solicited responses to both the processes used in decision making and the resulting RSVP letters (see Appendix I). As was expected, the members of the committee indicated satisfaction with both the committee's structure and the letters developed. A five-point ranking scale ranging from 1 - no agreement, to 5 - complete agreement, was used. The mean responses to each statement included in the assessment are shown in Table 5.

All members indicated complete agreement with the statement referring to the committee structure as participational. Satisfaction with the governance structure received a mean response of 4.73, and satisfaction with the letters produced showed a 4.60 mean response. All respondents indicated no agreement with the statement that said the alert and advisement system should not be continued. A final statement asked if participant wished to continue membership on the committee. A 4.87 response was obtained with 13 of the 15 respondents indicating total agreement and 2 responding much agreement. Evaluations were completed by 15 of the 16 members of the academic alert and advisement committee.

TABLE 5

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC ALERT AND ADVISEMENT COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND PRODUCTS

	Statement	Number Responses	Mean Response
1.	I was given equal opportunity to impact decisions made by committee.	15	4.80
2.	The chairman served as co-ordinator but did not control decision making.	15	4.67
3.	Only some committee members participated in decisions concerning attributes to be included in developing messages.	15	2.40
4.	I would categorize the committee's governance structure as participational.	15	5.00
5.	I was satisfied with the governance structure employed.	15	4.73
6.	I was allowed to incorporate unique features of my campus' programs and services in the messages.	12	4.87
7.	I was satisfied with the RSVP letters produced.	15	4.60
8.	The academic alert and advisement system should not be continued.	15	1.00
9.	I think the system should be expanded to include more of Miami-Dade's students.	15	5.00
10.	I would like to continue serving on this committee.	15	4.87

Proposal to Evaluate System

The final procedure followed in completing this project included the development of an evaluation plan to assess the effectiveness of the system from the perspective of students and faculty. The following guidelines were suggested as minimal requirements.

A minimum of 200 students from each campus who received alert letters should be surveyed regarding academic alert and advisement system. Student information obtained should include reaction to receiving letter, clarity of information contained in letter, use of information with faculty and advisors, and whether system should be continued. In addition, students should be given opportunity to comment about the system in an unstructured manner.

Faculty evaluation should include a random sample representing half of faculty at each campus. Information solicited should include reaction to being asked to provide progress and attendance information, assessment of student use of information provided in letters, opinions regarding benefits of system, whether system improved academic advisement of students, and if system should be continued.

A timing consideration was deemed important and it was suggested that data be collected within six weeks of date letters were received by students. A telephone survey or mailed questionnaire was proposed for student survey and campus mailing recommended for faculty evaluation of the system. The last step in the evaluation plan directed that

survey results be made available to Miami-Dade's executive committee and to all members of the academic alert and advisement committee.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nearly 10,000 first-time-in-college Miami-Dade students received academic alert and advisement letters 1978 fall term. This project included the development of the messages which composed the academic alert and advisement system, use and evaluation of a participational governance committee structure, and proposal of an evaluation plan to assess the system's effectiveness. It was possible to adhere to the implementation schedule for the development of the system because all resources anticipated were forthcoming.

Faculty completed the student progress rolls in record numbers. This support allowed the students to receive comprehensive information about their academic progress and attendance for each class. Because the students received their letters after seven weeks of a 16-week semester, there was time remaining in the term to improve deficiencies indicated. Students whose records indicated satisfactory performance in all classes were complimented for their good work. It was hoped that this positive emphasis might serve as a motivator for these students. The

crosstabulation of performance and attendance showed considerable correlation which justified including both components in the faculty assessment of students' progress.

The committee membership which developed the alert messages indicated considerable satisfaction with both the participational governance structure used and the letters that resulted. This satisfaction was apparent in members' meeting all deadlines for submitting work and in their regular attendance at committee meetings. As well, 15 of the 16 committee members indicated much or complete agreement with continuing to serve on the committee if it was decided to expand the program.

The suggestion that the evaluation plan be conducted shortly after the letters are received by students is appropriate if accurate assessments of the system are to be obtained from students and faculty. This aspect of the plan is important at Miami-Dade because there are several mailings to students each term and faculty are often surveyed regarding college projects. Evaluating the system soon after its implementation should lessen confusion about the project being assessed.

Implications

This study provided data which supported continuation of the academic alert and advisement system at Miami-Dade Community College. Faculty willingness to complete student progress rolls implied support for the system and

prompted the assumption that if the system is continued for new students in future terms, or expanded to include continuing students, it will receive similar support.

The positive reaction of committee members to the participational governance structure offered evidence that other college-wide committees responsible for development of student services programs would be well-served to consider a similar structure. Maximum efficiency seemed to result in the development of the alert system, and this was attributed, in part, to satisfaction with the committee's organization.

Data from faculty reports of student performance showed that after six weeks of the term at least 4,167 students, or 43 percent of the population, needed to improve in at least one course. Further, 52 percent of all students in the system were told that their attendance needed to improve, or that they were marked as "no shows" and needed to withdraw, in at least one class. These considerable numbers of students reported as needing to improve academic work and/or attendance demonstrated the need to provide students with this information early in the term so that they had an opportunity to resolve their problems. No other systematic evaluation of students' performance occurs at the college so this information can only help students in the effective and efficient use of campus resources.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this project, the following recommendations are offered.

1. The academic alert and advisement system should be continued and expanded to include continuing and transfer students.

2. The system should contain information about students' cumulative academic records as well as information about current term progress.

3. The proposed evaluation plan should be implemented fully and data collected given to committee responsible for expanding the system.

4. Refinements in, and additions to the system should be made after careful review of student and faculty evaluations of the program.

5. A participational governance structure should be incorporated in other college committees on a regular basis.

6. Further uses of the RSVP system should be investigated.

7. This project should be utilized as a model for development and implementation of additional student services.

Implementation of Recommendations

Suggestions for implementing recommendations follow.

1. Obtain approval of Miami-Dade's executive committee for continuing academic alert and advisement system.

2. Secure assistance of faculty, staff, and program development personnel for implementation of evaluation plan.

3. Establish membership for committee to refine and further develop system.

4. Obtain editorial assistance for refinement of current alert messages and development of additional messages.

5. Conduct an investigation of possibilities for provision of additional student services using RSVP system.

6. Provide copies of this project to district and campus leaders as well as to all research offices.

7. Conduct a thorough evaluation of the system after it has been expanded to include total student population.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

STANDARDS OF ACADEMIC PROGRESS

Effective Fall Term, 1978

The primary purpose for adopting new Standards of Academic Progress is for the College to be better able to identify and provide assistance for students with academic difficulties. Most students at Miami-Dade do make satisfactory academic progress. However, for those students who experience academic difficulties, the Standards of Academic Progress will alert them and the College in order to correct academic weaknesses at an early point in their college career. The Standards include limiting the number of credits for which students register and prescribe specific kinds of assistance.

The Standards are not intended to discourage or penalize students who are sincerely trying to make good use of the College's instructional services. Rather, the College is committed to providing students as much assistance as possible, so they may be successful in achieving their educational goals. The new Standards of Academic Progress provide students a variety of means to solve their academic problems and to begin to make satisfactory progress. The overall effect of these new Standards should be more satisfactory performance for students having academic difficulties, and increased public support for the College's efforts to provide sound educational programs of the highest quality.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS CATEGORY	RESULT
7-16 credits attempted with less than a 1.5 cumulative grade point average	Academic warning
17-29 credits attempted with less than a 1.5 cumulative grade point average	Academic probation
17-29 credits registered for but earned credit in less than half	Academic probation
30+ credits attempted with less than a 1.5 cumulative grade point average	Academic suspension*
30+ credits registered for but earned credit in less than half	Academic suspension*

Note: In calculating the category of courses registered for but earned less than half, incomplete grades (I) and audit grades (X) will not be calculated.

DEFINITIONS: STANDARDS OF ACADEMIC PROGRESS RESULTS

Academic warning signifies there will be a limitation of 9 credits in the Fall Term, 9 credits in the Winter Term, 3 credits in the Spring Term and 3 credits in the Summer Term. In addition, students should take 3 or more credits as part of a prescribed program of intervention which attempts to assist the student. In such cases, the limitation of credits may be increased to 12. This program of intervention may include developmental studies, a study skill course, career counseling or a combination of all three.

Academic probation signifies there will be a limitation of 9 credits in the Fall Term, 9 credits in the Winter Term, 3 credits in the Spring Term, and 3 credits in the Summer Term. As part of the credit limitation students should have 3 or more credits prescribed as part of a program of intervention.

Note: Students in this category (academic probation) who on the basis of each term's performance earn half of their credit and maintain a 2.0 term grade point average will never be suspended for academic reason.

*Academic suspension requires a student to discontinue enrollment at Miami-Dade through the next major term. (Neither the Spring Term, nor the Summer Term, nor the combination of both is considered a major term.)

Probation after suspension. Students who discontinue their enrollment because of suspension during a major term may re-enter the College and continue for each subsequent term of enrollment, provided they maintain a 2.0 term grade point average and earn credit in at least half the credits for which they register.

Academic dismissal represents a separation of the student from Miami-Dade Community College for at least twelve months. Academic dismissal occurs after students fail to meet the minimum requirements during probation after suspension. If, after being re-admitted following suspension, the students fail to meet minimum standards, which are maintaining a 2.0 term grade point average and earning credit in at least half the courses for which they are registered, they will be separated from the College.

*Continuing, former, and transfer students phase into academic standards of progress during Fall and Winter terms, 1978-79. There will be no academic suspension for any student during this period.

Students are eligible to apply for readmission to the College after the dismissal period. Admission will be on a petition basis; in order for readmission to be approved, the petition must present evidence of some change in the student's circumstances.

Miami-Dade Community College
11011 S.W. 104th Street, Miami, Florida 33176

Medical Center Campus
950 N.W. 20th Street
Miami, Florida 33136

New World Center Campus
300 N.E. 2nd Avenue
Miami, Florida 33132

North Campus
11380 N.W. 27th Avenue
Miami, Florida 33167

South Campus
11011 S.W. 104th Street
Miami, Florida 33176

M-DCC Policy, Effective Fall Term, 1978 and thereafter.

An Equal Access/Equal Opportunity Community College

7/78

APPENDIX B

ACADEMIC ALERT AND ADVISEMENT SYSTEM COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

South Campus:	Dr. Richard Schinoff, Chairman, Student Services Ms. Sara Lee Mackin, Career Planning and Advisement Mrs. Zelda Schwedel, Testing Dr. Margaret Hertz, Learning Support Services
North Campus:	Mr. John Miller, Counseling Dr. John Scerba, Research Mr. Dick Rashback, Behavioral Studies Mr. Andy Boder, Engineering
New World Center Campus:	Mrs. Joyce Crawford, Multi-Skills Lab Mr. Walker Neds, Advisement Mr. Bennie Moore, Community Service Mr. Charles Cox, Social Science
Medical Center Campus:	Mr. Sig Moline, Counseling
District:	Dr. Kamala Anandam, RSVP Consultant Mrs. Gloria Norman, Systems Analyst Mrs. Rose Anne Roche, Computer Programmer

APPENDIX C

STUDENT ATTRIBUTES USED IN ALERT SYSTEM

I. 1. Course Load

Equal to or greater than 12
Less than 12

2. Reading Level

High
Medium
Low
No score

3. Progress

Satisfactory
Needs improvement (in one or more courses)
No information (in all courses)

4. Attendance
   - needs improvement in one or more courses
   - no shows indicated in one or more courses

5. Veteran or Financial Aid

II. 6. Program Code

Decided (program codes not included in undecided and non-degree)
Undecided (ØØ, PC, AS)
Non-degree (program codes 98, Z5, Z6, Z7, Z8)

7. Withdrawal

1 or more courses (but not all classes)
No withdrawal

8. Advisor Code

Faculty advised
Self advised

9. Off campus (all campus outreach courses or all campus Open College Courses)

10. Non-native English speaking

III. 11. Special Notes. International students taking below 12 credits

12. No show (in one or more courses as indicated by faculty)

13. Handicapped

14. Math Score (low group)

15. Age (25 years or less, 26-54 years, equal to or greater than 55)

APPENDIX D

Grid I

Report on Progress
Computer-Enhanced Academic Alert and Advisement System

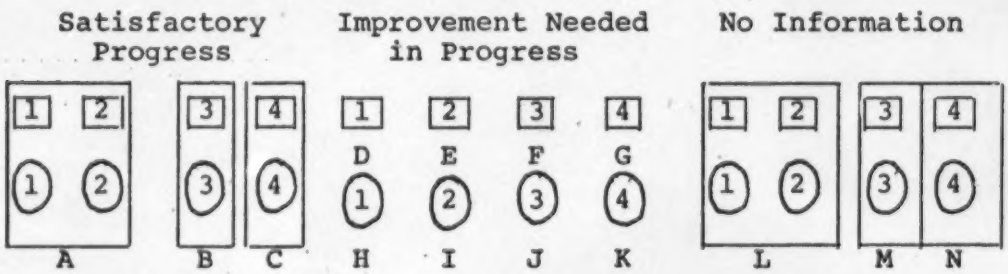
Factors Considered for Variable Feedback:

Faculty Evaluation . . . Satisfactory (all courses), Improvement needed (in one or more courses), No information for any course.

Course Load. . . . . 12 or more credits = □
less than 12 credits = ○

Reading Score. . . . . High = 1, Medium = 2, Low = 3, No information = 4
(See Test Data Sheet)

Groups Formed: A-N as shown below



Additional Considerations (Appendices) for Variable Feedback:

(1) Poor attendance reported by faculty in one or more courses.

(2) Receiving veterans/social security benefits and/or financial aid.

Unique Messages Written for:

Group I - A with appendix (1)

Group I - B with appendix (1)

Group I - C with appendix (1)

Group I - D with appendices (1), (2)	List courses showing faculty evaluations on performance, attendance, "no shows," and no information on performance.
Group I - E with appendices (1), (2)	
Group I - F with appendices (1), (2)	
Group I - G with appendices (1), (2)	
Group I - H with appendices (1), (2)	
Group I - I with appendices (1), (2)	
Group I - J with appendices (1), (2)	
Group I - K with appendices (1), (2)	

Group I - L with appendix (1)	List courses showing faculty evaluation on attendance and "no shows."
Group I - M with appendix (1)	
Group I - N with appendix (1)	

APPENDIX E

Grid II

Advisement for Next Term Registration
Computer-Enhanced Academic Alert and Advisement System

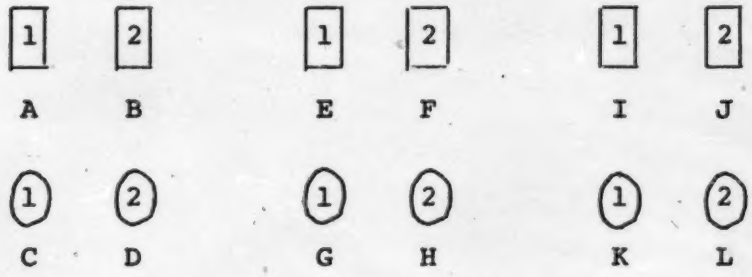
Factors Considered for Variable Feedback:

Program Code . . . Decided (Program Codes not included in the undecided are in non-degree), Undecided (Program Codes ØØ, PC, AS), Non-degree (98, Z5-Z8)

Withdrawal . . . . Withdrawn one or more courses but not all = □
No withdrawal = ○

Advisor Code . . . Faculty/Department Advisor = 1, Self-advised or no information = 2

Groups Formed: A-H as shown below



Additional Considerations (Appendices) for Variable Feedback:

(1) All courses taken off-campus (outreach or Open College)

(2) English is non-native language

Unique Messages Written for:

Group II - A with appendix (1)

Group II - B with appendices (1) and (2)

Group II - C with appendix (1)

Group II - D with appendices (1) and (2)

Group II - E with appendix (1)

Group II - F with appendices (1) and (2)

Group II - G with appendix (1)

Group II - H with appendices (1) and (2)

Group II - I with appendix (1)

Group II - J with appendices (1) and (2)

Group II - K with appendix (1)

Group II - L with appendices (1) and (2)

Groups Identified for Special Messages Irrespective of Grids I and II:

i) International students active in less than 12 credits
ii) Students with a handicap
iii) Students with low math score (See Test Data Sheet)
iv) Students differentiated by age:

a) 25 years or less (birth year 53-64)

b) 26 years or more (birth year 8-52)

South Campus uses age in differentiating the introductory paragraph written to students. New World Center Campus has excluded the Outreach students who are 55 years or older from getting a letter.

APPENDIX F

SPACE ALLOCATION FOR RSVP LETTER

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12 lines: space allotted for letterhead.

---

6 lines: space allotted for "Dear Student" and introduction lines, including unique lines by campus.

---

33 lines: space allotted for messages according to Grids I and II and appendices to the grids.

---

4 lines: space allotted for giving information re: persons/departments to contact for special assistance.

---

5 lines: space allotted for closing

APPENDIX G

SAMPLE RSVP LETTERS

MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
NORTH CAMPUS

October 13, 1978

Name and address of
student intentionally
removed.

Dear Geraldine:

I welcome you to the North Campus of Miami-Dade Community College as you begin your college career. We will be in touch with you from time to time to help you complete your educational goals. As a first step in this program I would like to share some of our observations with you.

One or more of your instructors pointed out that your performance needs improvement. (See list below.) Poor reading skills could be at the root of your problem. Please consider having your basic skills evaluated by the developmental studies center, Room 6102. Talk your problems over with your instructor. Also, poor attendance and poor progress often go together. Poor writing skills might also hurt your chances to get good grades in college. A writing course next term might overcome the problem. See an advisor in developmental studies, room 6102.

Improvement is needed in your performance and attendance in:
ISC1101 E
Unfortunately, I have no information on your performance for:
ENC1103

Now is the time for advisement and early registration. Return to your faculty advisor for assistance in selecting courses for the next term. The enclosed list has room and telephone numbers.

Take this letter with you when you meet with your advisor, your professor, or your counselor. Best wishes, Geraldine, for a successful term.

Sincerely,
Nicholas D. Gennett, Dean
Student Development/Learning Support Services

Student ID intentionally removed.

MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
SOUTH CAMPUS

October 13, 1978

Name and address of
student intentionally
removed.

Dear Melvin:

Welcome to Miami-Dade South. Since this is your first semester at South Campus, I hope that you are now in the swing of campus life and ready for an academic progress report. The following report will alert you to how you are progressing this term and should assist you in making decisions about your program of study.

So far at least one of your instructors has reported that your academic work needs to improve (see list below). Your difficulty may be caused by your enrollment in too many courses and/or by a reading problem. See your instructor(s) to discuss your progress. You may also need to get extra help, limit your outside activities or reduce your course load. Since your reading scores are in the middle range, if you are not already doing so, contact the learning support center for help. If your written assignments are difficult, you may again want to obtain assistance in the learning support center. Since you receive veterans benefits, keep in mind that you must maintain specified standards.

Improvement in performance is needed in: MUT1001 MUT1003
I have no information on your performance for: MUN1310

I notice, Melvin, that you have not withdrawn from any courses. This may indicate that you have registered for an appropriate schedule. It is now time to see your advisor to plan your courses for next term. If your major has changed, consult the enclosed list for the correct advisement location.

Important resource centers:
Learning support center, room 6339, 9 AM to 10 PM, 596-1337.
Career planning and advisement, room 3232, 8 AM to 8:30 PM, 596-1125.

Bring this letter with you when you discuss your academic progress with your instructors and when you select your courses for next term. I hope you find this information helpful and I wish you success at South Campus.

Sincerely,
Richard B. Schinoff
Dean of Student Services

Student ID intentionally
removed.

MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
NEW WORLD CENTER CAMPUS
COMMUNITY SERVICE

October 13, 1978

Name and address of
student intentionally
removed.

Dear Calvin:

Welcome to Miami-Dade Community College. I am pleased that you have decided to continue your education at the New World Center campus. This letter is to alert you as to how you are progressing so far and to assist you in making important decisions about career options, educational goals and academic advisement.

Unfortunately, in at least one of your courses your work needs improvement (see list below). Maybe, you have signed up for too many courses, or your reading skills might be below average. You should discuss your course progress with your teacher(s) and make an appointment in the testing office or the multi-skills reading lab (room 1545), if you have not already done so. Regular class attendance is very important for satisfactory progress. Writing skills are also important, so be certain that yours are up to college standards. The multi-skills lab (room 1545) can evaluate and advise you about this.

Improvement is needed in your performance and attendance in:
ENC1992 MAT1992
Unfortunately, I have no information on your performance for:
SSI1011

Happily, you have already decided upon a major. Since you have no course withdrawals, it appears you had good advise from your advisor. Before registering next term, return to your faculty advisor or the advisement office in room 1640 to get assistance. Off-campus advisement can be arranged by contacting the community service specialist assigned to your outreach center, or by calling the community services office at 577-6864.

In closing, Calvin, let me note that you and I share the basic goal of making your college career as successful as possible. This letter, its analysis and advice, represents my interest in forming a solid partnership with you to achieve that goal. Please bring this letter with you when you seek advice.

Sincerely,
Castell Bryant,
Division of Academic Support Services

Student ID intentionally removed.

MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
MEDICAL CENTER CAMPUS

October 13, 1978

Name and address of
student intentionally
removed.

Dear Coralia:

Welcome to the Medical Center Campus of Miami-Dade Community College. As you start your college career we want to share some things we have observed about your progress. We hope they will be helpful to you.

So far, one or more of your instructors believes your progress should be improved (see list below). You may want to enroll in a reading improvement course in the learning media center (phone 547-1276). You may also want to talk to your instructor and consider reducing your course load or your outside activities. If your writing skills need improvement, the learning media center can help you. Remember that your eligibility to receive veteran benefits is dependent on your regular and continued satisfactory progress. Don't wait to seek help if you need it.

Improvement in performance is needed in: ENC1313 OTS1001 OTS1103

Don't forget to see your advisor before registration begins for next term. If English is causing difficulty for you, contact the learning media center for help.

Your math measurement indicates that you may need help in this important area. Contact the learning media center for assistance.

Please bring this letter with you next time you meet with your instructor or your advisor. Best wishes for success at Miami-Dade.

Sincerely,

Ken Blye, Dean
Student and Instructional Support Services

Student ID intentionally removed.

APPENDIX H

IMPLEMENTATION TIME TABLE

A. First computer generated test copies of RSVP letters distributed to committee members on 16 August 1978.

B. Second computer generated test copies of RSVP letters distributed to committee members on 5 September 1978. Any minor editorial corrections to this second set of test copies of RSVP letters must be made by 12 September.

C. The student roll will be run the evening of Wednesday, 31 August, and delivered to the Registrar's Office on the morning of Thursday, 1 September. The Registrars will distribute the student rolls as they normally do classrolls.

D. The progress roll will be run the evening of Thursday, 28 September, and delivered to the Registrar's Office Friday morning, 29 September. The Campus Registrars will distribute the progress roll in the same manner they do the graderoll.

E. The faculty member will return the completed progress roll to the Registrar's Office by noon Monday, 9 October.

F. The Computer Center will have completed all key punching for the progress roll and will run the progress roll reports on Tuesday evening, 10 October.

G. The RSVP letter will be run the evening of Wednesday, 11 October, on the South Campus.

H. The letters will be folded in three parts to fit in a window envelope on Thursday, 12 October, on South Campus.

I. The folded letters will be delivered to the appropriate Campus on Friday, 13 October.

J. The letters will be mailed from each Campus after being stuffed into envelopes with appropriate inserts on Friday, 13 October, and Saturday, 14 October.

K. The students should receive the RSVP letter in the mail on Monday, 16 October, or Tuesday, 17 October.

L. Winter registration begins Monday, 30 October 1978.

APPENDIX I

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC ALERT AND ADVISEMENT COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND PRODUCTS

Respond to each statement below. Show your level of agreement by circling the number that indicates your response. Use this ranking system: 1 - No agreement; 2 - Very little agreement; 3 - Some agreement; 4 - Much agreement; 5 - Complete agreement.

1.	I was given equal opportunity to impact decisions made by committee.	1 2 3 4 5
2.	The chairman served as coordinator but did not control decision making.	1 2 3 4 5
3.	Only some committee members participated in decisions concerning attributes to be included in developing messages.	1 2 3 4 5
4.	I would categorize the governance structure of the committee as participational.	1 2 3 4 5
5.	I was satisfied with the governance structure employed.	
6.	I was allowed to incorporate unique features of my campus' programs and services in messages.	1 2 3 4 5
7.	I was satisfied with RSVP letters produced.	1 2 3 4 5
8.	The academic alert and advisement system should not be continued.	1 2 3 4 5
9.	I think the system should be expanded to include more of Miami-Dade's students.	1 2 3 4 5
10.	I would like to continue serving on this committee.	1 2 3 4 5

Return completed survey to: Sara Lee Mackin, Career Planning and Advisement, South Campus. Thank you.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES
96 POWELL LIBRARY BUILDING
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90024
JUN 13 1980
EF 36